wilderness and interview haggard and ragged strangers emerging from nowhere in the basin of the Upper Amazon River, in Tibet, or in the Altai Mountains. On such an assignment also I would be exposed to hunger, stench, lice, danger of sudden death, and I would listen to the yarns of strangers, trying to disentangle truth from fancy. In fact, I might have accepted a journalistic assignment to a prison. I might have come to this place voluntarily, to live among these men and share their privations. Surely I would have had enough strength to carry out my mission!

I do not remember how I hit on this theory of "assignment." Perhaps it was originally a joke, but it became a wonderful philosophy in a place like the Castle of Ekaterinoslav. It protected me against self-pity and kept me fit and active.

The mistreatment of the prisoners in the Castle ranged from simple beating, like the roughing up in police stations all over the world, to deliberate torture. What had started as the guards' revenge for a moment of fear became a routine. Many prisoners were beaten to death without the slightest provocation on their part, though their death certificates specified pneumonia. If I were a journalist assigned to report on the prison, obviously it would be my job to expose these facts. . . .

I asked a lawyer who was in touch with political prisoners whether he and his friends in the city could get publicity for a factual account of the prison. He promised that every effort would be made to distribute the report as widely as possible, but added that he considered it too dangerous to draw up such a report within the prison and did not recommend such a venture. I decided to disregard his warning.

My campaign plan envisaged three steps: first, to establish a network of trustworthy "correspondents," at least two men in each ward; next, to assemble facts, checking and rechecking each bit of testimony; then, to write the report.

The cracks in the walls—the hiding place of the bugs—provided an excellent cache for my files. The tower was strategically located for contacts with other wards. The guards in the hall of our wing were not very mean, the hall cleaners were ready to carry mail from ward to ward for a pinch of tobacco per letter. In a month I had assembled about a hundred cases of unwarranted beatings, some of them fatal. These were hard facts—with names, dates, precise details attested by scores of witnesses. Writing with a sharp pencil, I could put twenty-five lines of forty letters each—the content of half a regular typewritten page—on a sheet of cigarette paper of the usual size, 2¼ by 1¾ inches. My report comprised about a hundred such sheets. We passed them to our friends outside